

INVITATION FOR THE PUBLIC EVENT OF THE PROJECT



Two defining phases of the Holocaust in Serbia



A project financed by the EACEA - Europe for Citizens Programme; Strand 1 - European Remembrance (REMEM)

PROJECT PARTNERS

The Historical Archives of Belgrade (Serbia) www.arhiv-beograda.org

Terraforming (Sweden, the Netherlands, Serbia) www.terraforming.org

NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (the Netherlands) www.niod.knaw.nl

Center for Holocaust Research and Education (CHRE) (Serbia) University of Rijeka,

Department of Cultural Studies (Croatia) www.ffri.uniri.hr

Event 3 – Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Date: Wednesday 21 September 2016
Time: 13.30 – 17.00 hrs
Venue: NIOD, Herengracht 380, 1016 CJ Amsterdam, www.niod.knaw.nl

Programme

- 13.30 – 13.40 Opening by Frank van Vree, director NIOD
- 13.40 – 13.50 Short presentation about the project
Misko Stanisic, Creative Director of Terraforming network
Stockholm-Amsterdam, Novi Sad
- 13.50 – 14.10 Holocaust in German-occupied Serbia:
concentration camp Judenlager Semlin
Milan Koljanin, PhD Historian, Senior Researcher at the
Institute for Contemporary History in Belgrade

Dr. Koljanin is one of the main experts on Holocaust in Serbia. From his PhD thesis *Antisemitism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1919-1941* he authored several books about the subject. In particular, his research focused on the German concentration camp at the Belgrade's Old Fairground (Sajmiste) – Judenlager Semlin, a place where most of the Serbian Jewish women and children were murdered between October 1941-April 1942.

- 14.10 – 14.25 Victim's Database
Vladimir Mijatovic, Senior Archivist at the Historical Archives
of Belgrade

The Historical Archives of Belgrade recently discovered forgotten boxes with unprocessed documentation about several thousand Belgrade Jews that were killed at Judenlager Semlin. Combining these documents with the data from several other pre-war archive funds, the archivists started the work on a new digital database that would present about 3000 Jewish victims and their life before the Holocaust, with the aim to bring closer a pre-war Jewish life of Belgrade, and contribute the material to the new Memorial that is planned to be developed at the site of the former concentration camp at the Old Fairground.

- 14.25 – 14.45 Exhibition "October 1941 – Escalating into Holocaust"
Milovan Pisarri, PhD Historian, and Nikola Radic Lucati, Artist
and activist

In German-occupied Belgrade life was still going on, this way or another, people were still going to work, football matches were played, kids were going to school. While in the same time the Holocaust was happening in the middle of the city, in front of our eyes. The exhibition “October 1941 – Escalating into Holocaust” is pointing out this uncomfortable and painful side of the Holocaust, following the escalation of the Nazi terror in Serbia in October 1941.

The exhibition is developed by the Center for Holocaust Research and Education from Belgrade, led by the Italian researcher Milovan Pissarri and Belgrade-born Nikola Radic Lucati. The exhibition is currently on tour around Serbia.

14.45 – 15.05 Coffee/Tea Break

15.05 – 15.15 Educational Materials

Misko Stanisic, Creative Director of Terraforming network

15.15 – 15.35 Musealisation of the Holocaust – Memory and Representation

Erik Somers, PhD Historian at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies

15.35 – 15.55 Holocaust and Remembrance – Kazerne Dossin: Memorial and Museum

Pieter Lagrou, Professor of History, University of Brussels

15.55 – 16.30 Q&A and roundup

16.30 – 17.45 Drinks

Registration: send an email to m.van.kessel@niod.knaw.nl

BACKGROUND

Concentration camp at Sajmište was a death camp for Jewish women and children from German occupied Serbia, most of them, about 5.500, from Belgrade. A number of Roma women and children were interned too. In six weeks, April-May 1942, the inmates at Sajmište were systematically murdered by the use of a mobile gas van dispatched from Berlin especially for that purpose.

For 70 years there were no detailed data about the victims, until recently, when archivists from the Historical Archives of Belgrade found 6 boxes among old unsorted piles. The boxes revealed unprocessed and unlisted documentation about more than 2000 Belgrade Jews killed at the Sajmište concentration camp. Motivated after this discovery, the Historical Archives of Belgrade initiated a wide international partnership with the aim to explore the best contemporary experiences and methodologies, as well as the most productive, sustainable and effective outcomes in processing such material.

This way the project will contribute to expand the view from local to European perspectives and further examine the Holocaust and its defining impact on the common European values in post-war Europe, including the current European challenges of intolerance, discrimination and raising anti-Semitism and anti-Romanyism.

THE PROJECT

The main project goal is to further support Holocaust remembrance, research and education, with particular aim to explore shared European aspects of the Holocaust by taking Holocaust in Serbia as starting point, in order to further discuss important current European challenges, and Holocaust as a shared European narrative that defines European values of diversity, tolerance and Human Rights.

Through the series of 6 public events in Serbia, Sweden and the Netherlands, international experts will present and discuss shared European aspects of the Holocaust, Holocaust research, commemoration, teaching and learning about Holocaust, as well as current European challenges in facing intolerance, anti-Semitism, anti-Romanyism, xenophobia etc.

In addition, a database of the Holocaust victims killed at the concentration camp Old Fairground (Staro Sajmište) in Belgrade, a traveling exhibition, and a set of educational materials and an online presentation will be produced, and presented at the events.

Project duration:

1 September 2015 - 28 February 2017

Contact and information:

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Terraforming / Anne Frank House Educational Projects

Project website:

<http://www.arhiv-beograda.org/holokaust/>

EXPECTED RESULTS

VICTIM'S DATABASE

in charge of the task: **The Historical Archives of Belgrade**

an online database listing the Holocaust victims murdered at the concentration camp at Sajmište

The database will provide details such as name, age, address, profession, school etc. listing the Holocaust victims murdered at the concentration camp at Sajmište. In addition, the database will also include information about the pre-war life of the Belgrade Jews murdered at the concentration camp at Sajmište. The database will be digital, searchable and available online.

EXHIBITION

in charge of the task: **Center for Holocaust Research and Education (CHRE)**

a modular traveling exhibition presenting the two defining phases of the Holocaust in Serbia

The exhibition focuses on October 1941. During each day of October 1941 Nazis and their helpers committed mass killings on different locations around occupied Serbia. Thousands of civilians: Serbs, Jews and Roma were shot by killing squads. This led to the final phase of the Holocaust in Serbia - a systematic killing of remaining Jews (women and children) detained at the Sajmište camp in Belgrade, using notorious mobile gas van.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

in charge of the task: **Terraforming**

educational materials for use in schools, with focus on personal stories and the pre-war Jewish life in Belgrade

Educational materials will consist of a set of 5 booklets with manuals for teachers, available online and in print, focusing on young victims, students of Belgrade schools murdered at the concentration camp at Sajmište in 1942. Through personal stories of these young victims, their families and other people in their surroundings, the educational materials will present the pre-war Jewish life in Belgrade, the Holocaust, and its devastating consequences. Educational materials will combine the visual language of graphic novels, historical photographs and documents, testimonies and other materials.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

in charge of the task: **The Project Team**

a series of 6 international events with presentations, panel discussions and workshops

A series of 6 international events will be held from April 2016 to January 2017. Beside presentations of the database, the exhibition and the educational materials, each event will focus on two main themes: one related to the Holocaust in Serbia, and the other involving a broader European context, presented and discussed by international experts. In addition, there will be workshops and lectures related to teaching and learning about Holocaust, shared European aspects of the Holocaust, current European challenges in facing intolerance, anti-Semitism, anti-Romanyism, and other subjects.

PUBLICATION

in charge of the task: **Department of Cultural Studies, University of Rijeka**

a publication presenting the project findings

At the final stage of the project in February 2017, a publication will be presented. It will be a collection of papers and articles contributed by international experts during the projects' 6 events, compiled by the editorial team.

COMING EVENTS

EVENT Kragujevac, Serbia on 19 October 2016

(arriving in Belgrade on 18 October, 19 October the event, 20 October flight back to Amsterdam)

Theme 1: "Execution squads in Serbia - escalating into Holocaust"

Theme 2: "The intolerance that facilitated Holocaust - consequences for the post-war Europe"

EVENT Jasi, Romania on 7 November 2016

(in connection to the IHRA plenary meeting during the Romanian chairmanship)

Theme 1: "The memorialization of the victims of the concentration camp at Sajmište"

Theme 2: "Holocaust education and current rise of intolerance in Europe"

EVENT Novi Sad, Serbia – the final event on 21 January 2017

(arriving in Belgrade on 20 January, 21 January the event, 22 January flight back to Amsterdam)

Theme 1: Presentation of the project and its results – "Escalating into Holocaust – two defining phases of the Holocaust in Serbia"

Theme 2: "Holocaust education and current rise of intolerance in Europe"



BELGRADE FAIR EXHIBITION GROUNDS 1937-1938

The first phase of construction on the site of the Belgrade Fair Exhibition Grounds started in 1937. The five Yugoslav pavilions were the first to be built, followed by the Central Tower, Italian, Romanian, Czechoslovakian and Spasic's pavilions. The first Belgrade Fair was opened on September 11th, 1937. In 1938 the opening of the Turkish and German pavilions marks the end of the second phase of construction.



Belgrade Fair Grounds 1938

JEWISH CAMP ZEMUN - JUDENLAGER SEMLIN

8 December, 1941 the camp on the Belgrade Fair Grounds is established. It was run by the Gestapo in Serbia and under the command of SS officers (despite that it was formally on the ground occupied by the Ustaše-led Independent State of Croatia). It was known as Judenlager Semlin, or the Fair Grounds (Sajmište) camp.

After executing their men, the first Jewish and Roma families, mainly women, children and the elderly were taken to Jewish Camp in Zemun. A total of 6,400 Jewish and around 600 Roma women were interned. In late March 1942, a custom-made vehicle, a Saurer gas van, designed in Germany as a tool for mass killings, arrives in Belgrade carrying two officers, Wilhelm Goetz and Erwin Meyer. On March 18th, the German police arrested all doctors and patients in the Jewish hospital in Visokog Stevana street (today, the building houses the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation, while before the occupation it belonged to Jewish Women's Society). The hospital staff and patients from the hospital's section at the Oneg Shabbat Jewish Culture Society at 16 Jevrejska Street were arrested too. From 19 to 22 March, 1942, between 700 and 800 Jews from this group were driven away and killed in the gas van known as "dušegupka". Their bodies were buried in the graves in Jajinci that had already been prepared. From early April – 10 May, 1942, Jewish women and their families held in the Sajmište camp were told they would be transferred to another camp in Romania or Poland. They were told to pack their things in boxes and write their names and addresses on them. They were all suffocated in the "dušegupka" while crossing the pontoon bridge on their way from Belgrade to Jajinci. Their bodies were buried there together with those of other inmates. Throughout 1943 – 1944 the corpses were being exhumed and burned, so as to hide all evidence of the crimes.

FUTURE OF SAJMIŠTE AS A PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE

No memorial centres or museums have ever been built on the former campgrounds. For a long time the area where the camp was located was in a very poor condition as a result of disuse and neglect.

In spite of the important place that it occupies in the history of the Holocaust, in the post war era, Sajmiste was rarely recognised as a site of Holocaust remembrance. In socialist Yugoslavia, the suffering of Jews tended to be interpreted as a manifestation of the broader 'reign of terror' instituted by the Nazis against the civilian population.

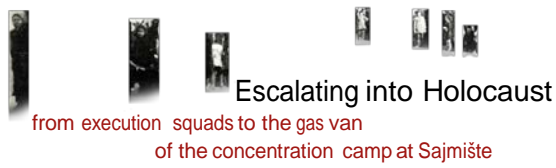
Recently, the Belgrade City Council announced the plans of building a permanent Memorial Center at the site. The Museum of Genocide Victims in Belgrade and the newly established Memorial Center Committee are now making plans for the Memorial Center and Museum, with aim to start the project in 2017.

By putting Concentration camp at Sajmište in public and international focus, and by creating materials that could be used at the future Memorial, the project aim to contribute to this important task.



the site of the concentration camp at Sajmište today

The historical background text compiled using the data published in the work by Dr. Milan Koljanin (1992) "Nemački logor na Beogradskom Sajmištu", Institute for Contemporary History, Belgrade.



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